

Staff Summary

The Early Learning Council met from 9:00-11:30 am prior to attending a symposium sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures, "Breakthroughs in Early Learning: Advances in Science, Economics and State Policy." Bob Watt, Council co-chair, led the group in **brainstorming**, "What would it look like if we had a situation in which every child got off to a great start? What would success look like?"

OVERARCHING THEMES

1. The State provides leadership, policy support and funding for quality early learning.
2. People in Washington State see the link between early learning and children's future success.
3. Children have a vision for their future that is connected to education.
4. Children have their basic needs for food, shelter, health services and care met.
5. Parents are supported and know where to go for information and support.
6. Children and families are part of supportive communities that include coordinated high-quality educational environments.
7. Every child has access to culturally-respectful early learning opportunities from birth so he/she arrives at school socially, emotionally and cognitively ready.
8. Early learning, K-12 and Higher Education work together to integrate curriculum and practices.
9. Childhood development, early learning and parenting skills are respected and taught.
10. There is no racially or economically identifiable achievement gap.

PROGRAM AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS (HB 1152)

Parent Involvement, Choices and Support

- Children's home life experiences enable them to be successful.
- Primary caregivers are valued as leaders throughout their lives; close the gap between what we know and what we do as joyful and confident parents.
- All families know where to go for information and support; comprehensive support for new mothers and their families for childrearing decisions; basic parenting education, family management skills, established support systems for both male and female from the time they decide to start a family.
- Every parent has good information and support for their children's early learning; families should be able to choose programs fitting their cultural needs; families know and recognize early learning programs and they are accessible to all; parent involvement in early learning programs.
- All employers allow family choice re: parenting; adults don't have to choose between being a good parent and being a good worker. There is a choice. Children

don't have to be in care for 10-12 hours a day; moms and dads on TANF allowed to stay home for one year.

- Mothers are so supported in our state that post-partum depression is recognized and addressed.

Communities

- Community-based leaders and parents are listened to.
- Every child is born to a community that sees its collective future in each new unique expression of human consciousness and acts to support it; a child's community begins at birth and continues through life.
- Every child has a consistent, high-level educational environment provided by the community; a coordinated effort in every community - parents, business, philanthropy for quality early learning; comprehensive preschool program offered to all communities.
- Parents, grandparents, caretakers have safe, supportive places in their communities.
- Schools would be community centers open to families to learn together-the young, school age, parents and grandparents.
- Communities are planned to encourage healthy behaviors.

Early Learning

Evidence-based

- Parents, providers and teachers use research on brain development to foster growth, early learning and brain research linked to providers of early services.
- System is intentional and based on solid data/information and agreed on outcomes.
- Learn from programs and industries that have done it right.

Governance

- Early learning sets standards of seamlessness in governance.
- Continue team approach.
- Systems work forward from pre-birth rather than backwards.

Diversity

- Multi-cultural, multi-lingual resources available in all communities; early learning providers bilingual speakers.
- All children have early learning opportunities that are respectful of cultures; cultural acceptance - value and use them as strengths to accept each other.
- Equity is a focus at all levels where children are in care.
- Children who learn differently are an integral part of the system and communities.

Policies and Standards

- No eligibility criteria for families.
- Programs are not overly steeped in regulations.
- All learning programs are high quality, rigorous, measured and accountable.

Quality Improvement

- Washington State has a quality rating system that recognizes curriculum, parents, trained and compensated teachers, low child-staff ratios, and appropriate physical space.
- Continue to look at a variety of learning programs and certify.
- Quality mentorship programs for people working with children.
- School districts have social workers to work with families who need help.
- All school districts mandated to have a birth-three program; more support for school district early intervention programs.

Support to those working in early learning

- Providers able to afford working in the profession and to stay in the profession - receive benefits.
- Support for regulators.

Transitions

- Early learning and K-12 teachers meet and work together collaboratively; early learning teachers and educators integrate their curriculum and practices so children don't have to do that work
- Transitions between early learning and K-12 so that K-12 looks back and sees that early learning and K-12 are on same page; rich promise of nurturing in early years is deepened as child moves through K-12 and Higher Education.
- K-12, Higher Education and workplaces reflect the social-emotional work of early learning.